

Iowa Youth Congress

Youth Civic Participation Project

Iowa Division of Latino Affairs, December 2006



Inaugural Session, Iowa Youth Congress Representatives

(1 Dec 06)

Iowa student representatives elected from 48 high schools met December first and second, 2006, in Des Moines. They held their first daylong session in the Iowa House Chamber.



Speaker Pat Murphy

Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal and House Speaker Pat Murphy addressed the Youth Congress during the morning opening session.

Once called to order the Youth Congress went to work on their agenda and elected their first president, Sukriti Nayar and Patrick Trizila as their Vice President.

They then ordered and debated the issues brought in from their five regional meetings.

In the late afternoon the Youth Congress moved to vote on which legislative proposals to present to the 82nd Iowa General Assembly.



President's Letter



Sukriti Nayar, Iowa Youth Congress President, presiding over their inaugural session.

Being elected as president of the first Iowa Youth Congress is truly an honor. Going into the project I really didn't have any expectations; but the two days that the Congress met taught me much more about leadership and a group's potential than I had ever learned before.

Both Melissa Esquivel and Armando Villareal have worked tirelessly to get this project off the ground and I knew that the Congress would not have been the same without it. It was an incredible feeling to know that our group of intelligent, forward-thinking, compassionate teenagers have the power to make a difference for people in Iowa.

We all learned so much about the Iowa Legislature and the tremendous amount of hard work that goes into making things happen and for that we are all grateful.

Though we are pioneers in this field of encouraging youth civic participation, we can always use more help and support to spread the word and cause a chain reaction. I'm excited to be working with so many talented individuals and I hope that in 2007 and beyond will bring us all success by meeting the goals we have for the Iowa Youth Congress.



First Youth Congress President Sukriti Nayar leading a caucus discuss during thier planning session at Drake University.



Patrick Trizila, Iowa Youth Congress Vice President, during the planning session at Drake University

I am a member of the ROTC at my high school and a member of the Iowa National Guard. Last December, I was elected Vice President of the Iowa Youth Congress and now I see how we, the youth of today, have a meaningful role to play in making our state the best it can be.

I believe that we, the Youth Congress is well on its way to accomplish the goals we set for the year.

I feel that we are making students aware that we are the future and this congress is proof of that.



Iowa Youth Congress, during their inaugural session.

Recommendations

Proposed by the Iowa Youth Congress
for the 82nd Iowa Legislature, 2007

IOWA

Iowa Opportunity Workforce Act.

An act relating to residency qualifications for purposes of postsecondary tuition and fees paid at public institutions of higher education in Iowa.

16 to 17 Bill

A bill to raise the high school dropout age from 16 to 17 requiring parental consent.

Resolution

That the 82nd Iowa Legislature recognize the need to provide sex education in public high schools.

High School ESL Policy

The Youth Congress is conducting a survey of school administrators and teachers to determine the rationale why in some schools ESL is given half credit rather than full credit.

I am proud to have witnessed the first ever Youth Congress. We did not know quite what to expect initially, however the students soon joined in and participated with more passion and conviction than any of them had anticipated. They keep asking when the Youth Congress will be meeting again, just let us know and we will be there.

-Byron Philips, Assistant Principal
Waterloo, West High School



Iowa Youth Congress Representatives holding a caucus meeting on one of the issues before the Congress.

I believe the Iowa Youth Congress is an excellent vehicle to educate and involve youth in the legislative process. In essence we are promoting leadership and self-advocacy for the community.

-Steve Gonzalez, LISW
Des Moines, North High School

I have been inspired by the organization and attention to detail that the students exhibited that participated in this program. Everyone was on task and took their commitment to civic responsibilities very seriously. What a wonderful way to exhibit character that counts through collective collaboration demonstrating that our youth of today do possess intellectual capital which can be shaped to meet the challenges of the future.

-Mary Ann Spicer, President
Sisters On Target

The Iowa Youth Congress is an excellent opportunity for students to get involved and make a difference in the legislative system, and it's also a great way for the students to get to know other kids from different schools to share experiences and make new friends."

-Susan Langan, Counselor
Cedar Falls High School

As we continue to find ways to make every class more relevant, this experience has just set a new standard. It has been great for the representatives as well as those they represent.

-Jim Vanderloo, Principal
Sioux City, West High School

Regional Chairs



One of the greatest feelings a person can have is that no matter what age that person is, he or she can make a difference.

When the Iowa Youth Congress convened for the first time in December of 2006, my

heart, as well as the hearts' of the other members of the youth congress was impregnated with the feeling of making a difference.

However, as the hours of that day passed that feeling in our hearts was transformed into actions; on that day the youth congress passed two issues, an administrative rule, and a resolution.

It is a privilege to have had such an opportunity where feelings are able to be transformed into actions that can help people move closer toward reaching their full potential as well as to live happy, productive lives.

-Adolfo Carbajal, Representative
Perry High School
Region A Chairperson

The Iowa Youth Congress is providing an excellent opportunity for high school students to get involved in their local legislature and to make a difference in their communities for not only minorities but all people. This program is a great way to prepare today's youth to become tomorrow's great leaders and to serve their country as responsible citizens.

-Arusha Afzal, Representative
Cedar Falls High School
Region B Chairperson

This congress is a step in a new direction. America was founded by those who wanted to take steps into a new direction. This congress is thus fulfilling the American dream and that of our forefathers by teaching, and practicing democracy on a new level with the young minds of today's youth, that have not yet been corrupted by all of the personal agendas that drive today's leaders.

-David Svoboda, Representative
Central High School, Davenport
Region C Chairperson

I am extremely proud to be a representative in this youth congress. This is a step in the right direction for the youth of today. We are the future and youth of today and we need to be involved. To be the chair of my region is very rewarding. This youth congress has taught me so much and I am thankful that I am going to be able to take this with me wherever I go.

-Michelle Venator, Representative
Ottumwa High School
Region D Chairperson

Being a part of the Youth Congress, especially while in the House Chambers was a great opportunity to debate the issues that matter most to us. It was very beneficial as far as decision making...something that we [youth] will have to face especially with the upcoming presidential election.

-Ashley Parker, Representative
Lincoln High School, Des Moines
Region E Chairperson



First Youth Congress President Sukriti Nayar congratulating Melissa Esquivel recipient of the first Iowa Youth Congress Award.



Thank You!

It was truly a remarkable experience and perhaps an historic one. What a wonderful presence of smart young people taking seriously a responsibility they were elected to perform. And that they did, by bringing up and debating a number of proposals which they voted on to present to the Iowa 82nd General Assembly.

Thank you for your support, your help, and your words of encouragement. It is because of you that the first Iowa Youth Congress was a success. One with your continuing support will be a permanent success story in our Iowa.



December 1, 2006, student representatives at the Iowa House Chamber waiting their turn to speak on the specific issues before them.



December 2, 2006, at Drake University during the youth congress legislative planning session.

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Join the team! Make your contribution to the
Iowa Division of Latino Affairs in
support of the Iowa Youth Congress.

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Iowa Youth Congress

In collaboration with the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans and the Iowa Commission on the Status of Asian and Pacific Islanders Heritage. The purpose of this project is to evoke a sense of community and place and infuse the coming generation with hope.

Iowa Division of Latino Affairs, December 2006

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